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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASTANA 000253

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#) [KG](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN SUGGESTS MULTILATERAL APPROACH ON
MANAS, URGES BETTER U.S.-RUSSIA RELATIONS

REF: A. BISHKEK 0123

[1](#)B. PARIS 0213

[1](#)C. ASTANA 0095

Classified By: Ambassador Richard E. Hoagland: 1.4 (B), (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The Ambassador called on Presidential Foreign Policy Adviser Khairat Sarybay February 11 to seek Kazakhstan's views on Kyrgyzstan's announced decision to close Manas Air Base and Russia's intentions in Central Asia and Afghanistan. Noting that Russia is Kazakhstan's strategic ally and closest partner, Sarybay was generally restrained in his responses. He suggested the United States -- and its coalition partners -- might consider offering a financial package to Kyrgyzstan to retain Manas. He encouraged the United States to work to repair its relationship with Russia, implying that on this issue President Medvedev might be more flexible than Prime Minister Putin. To help Kazakhstan maintain its foreign policy balance, Sarybay urged early visits by Secretary Clinton and President Obama. END SUMMARY.

KYRGYZSTAN'S DECISION TO CLOSE MANAS

[1](#)2. (C) When asked for Kazakhstan's views and analysis of President Bakiyev's decision to close Manas Air Base, Sarybay initially responded it was Bakiyev's own decision, and Kazakhstan respects the decisions of sovereign and independent countries. He added it probably was not an easy decision for Bakiyev, and the Kyrgyz "must understand the difficult situation in Afghanistan and the need for the international coalition to try to stabilize it." Then Sarybay became more frank: "(Bakiyev) was promised a huge amount of money. We know the situation in Kyrgyzstan is dire, and in the end he 'accepted the proposal.'" Sarybay elaborated on the situation in Kyrgyzstan: no jobs, labor migrants returning in droves, no sources of credit, energy sector collapsing. Sarybay hastened to add he has no proof Russia conditioned its promised assistance to Bakiyev, but said, in his personal view, it had to have been a quid pro quo.

[1](#)3. (C) Sarybay then added, "I'm not sure this (base closure) is a final decision. It depends on a lot a factors." When

invited to elaborate the factors, Sarybay declined and returned to his original formulation about the need to respect the sovereignty and independence of Kyrgyzstan. Then he wavered again and said, "If the United States and other coalition partners could offer a strong financial package, it might help" (see reftels A and B).

RUSSIA, CENTRAL ASIA, AFGHANISTAN

14. (C) Initially, Sarybay was not fully comfortable responding to a question about Russia's policies and plans in Central Asia and Afghanistan. He reaffirmed Kazakhstan's special relationship with Russia, including strong political and commercial relations. The Ambassador reiterated the United States understands and respects this relationship, asking only that Kazakhstan maintain its balance with other important relationships. Sarybay replied, "That certainly is our fundamental goal. You can help by pushing for early visits by President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton, because the image of a relationship is paramount in this region. You can undo years of perceived neglect and disinterest with one 24-hour visit. That should not be too much to ask."

15. (C) Sarybay noted President Nazarbayev has "warm relations" with both President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin. He suggested Russia's relations with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and "even Turkmenistan" are balanced, whereas Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are more subject to heavy pressure from Moscow because of their poverty.

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16. (C) Broadening the conversation, Sarybay asked the Ambassador to note the debate in the Russian press about whether or not Moscow has the resources and authority to play the role of "Big Brother." Becoming more candid, Sarybay said, "Putin will not change," whereas Medvedev told Nazarbayev he is ready to work with the United States -- if the United States takes the first step. Sarybay said Nazarbayev sees this as a "golden chance" -- but reiterated the United States has to take the first step. Sarybay said he thought the statements by all, including German Chancellor Merkel, at the Munich security conference were "balanced and useful," noting that Kazakhstan generally welcomed Vice President Biden's comments.

17. (C) When asked for his views on Russia's interests in Afghanistan, Sarybay smiled, "You'd better ask (Kremlin Foreign Policy Adviser) Prihodko." Then he added, "They have to be interested in the stability and security that would come from defeating extremism, and anti-narcotics, at the very least."

RUSSIA AND THE UNITED STATES

18. (C) Sarybay urged the United States to listen to Russia closely and take its views seriously (see reftel C, President Nazarbayev's similar advice to CENTCOM CDR General Petraeus).

He confided that during Nazarbayev's most recent trip to Moscow for the Collective Security Treaty Organization Summit, Medvedev had told Nazarbayev, "I'm a representative of the new generation. I wasn't poisoned by the past history of anti-Americanism during the Cold War. I was really ready to work with Washington, but I was crossed by the Missile Defense and NATO issues." (COMMENT: Although Sarybay once again declined to elaborate, it would appear that Medvedev could have meant he was crossed by hard-liners' views on these issues, since neither issue simply popped up after Medvedev's election. END COMMENT.)

19. (C) The Ambassador asked if Sarybay thought Putin would allow a better relationship for Russia with the United States. He responded, "Probably only on his own terms." He expanded, "However, I personally find it interesting that even in the Kremlin no one's sure 'who's Putin and who's

Medvedev, ' ' i.e., who's really in charge. Sarybay added, "And some think Putin now regrets his decision to leave the Kremlin."

KAZAKHSTAN AND THE UNITED STATES

¶10. (C) When asked if he had any bilateral issues to raise, Sarybay took time to go through his file of tabbed issue papers. He closed it and said, "Nope, we're on an even keel. Only once again I ask that you urge early Obama and Clinton visits."

¶11. (C) COMMENT: If Washington eventually decides to offer to negotiate with Bishkek about Manas, we find intriguing the suggestion that any offer should be multilateral from the United States and its coalition partners (see reftel). This kind of multilateral approach might possibly not be rejected out of hand -- or at least might stimulate debate in Moscow. END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND